The Health Care System in Turkey

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Background

Turkey has 86 million citizens, and its population is growing by 1.2 percent annually (Turkey population,2023). At the national level, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is in charge of developing the nation's healthcare strategy and is also the main provider of medical services (Turkish MoH,2020). There were 68 university hospitals, 571 private hospitals, and 879 public hospitals run by the MoH in 2019. There are 225,863 beds in hospitals overall. Turkey had 1,534 inpatient medical facilities as of 2020, up nearly hundreds from 1,439 in 2010 to 1,534 in 2020 (Zeynep Dierks, 2022). In 2016, Turkey welcomed 750,000 medical tourists from 60 different countries and generated $5.8 billion in revenue. According to MoH statistics, there are 700 businesses that import and manufacture medical devices in addition to the 1,000 manufacturers. Small-scale producers of items like bandages, syringes, orthopedics, and surgical instruments are the norm for manufacturers (Healthcare Resource Guide,2019).

All citizens of Turkey who have registered with the Social Security Institution (SGK) have a premium automatically deducted from their paychecks and have access to a number of basic medical services at hospitals that are registered with SGK all over the nation. Medication and outpatient services necessitate some out-of-pocket costs. On a means-tested basis, unemployed, independent contractors, and unregistered workers can pay premiums directly; those with low incomes receive government assistance. Children of unregistered adults are automatically covered by the system. Additionally, Turkey has a sizable private hospital network that provides higher-quality care and quicker wait times (Country Information Report, Turkey,2020).

The quality of Turkey's medical care has risen dramatically in recent decades. Access to, and the quality of, healthcare throughout the country has vastly increased. Genel Salk Sigortas, Turkey's national healthcare program, is open to all citizens. Citizens and permanent residents of Turkey have access to this healthcare system. Public and private hospitals and clinics are supported by social insurance.

Turkey is home to numerous hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities. In most large cities, you may find state-of-the-art hospitals staffed by trained professionals. The majority of medical services are provided by private companies. Primary healthcare is the foundation of the Turkish healthcare system. Nationwide, primary care clinics (Salk Oca) offer services like birth control, vaccinations, and the treatment of everyday illnesses. When necessary, patients are referred to specialists by these clinics.

Public and private healthcare options are available in Turkey. Care in government-run hospitals is inexpensive or free for anyone who have national health insurance. Private hospitals are more upscale and comfortable, but they require payment through a health savings account or private insurance. The majority of working adults, retirees, and the unemployed are covered by the General Health.

Insurance system.

Contributions to the insurance pool come from the government, businesses, and workers themselves. Patients with private health insurance can see private physicians of their choosing and access a wider range of medical services. Turkey's low healthcare costs and high standard of living are luring foreign patients. Patients from other countries travel to the United States for plastic surgery, dental care, organ transplants, and reproductive treatments.

Drugs:

Turkey has a thriving pharmaceutical industry. A large variety of OTC medications are available at pharmacies (eczane) across the country. Drug prices are capped by the government to ensure they remain affordable and readily available.

Human resources:

In 2020, there were approximately 170 thousand physicians working, or an average of 488 people for every doctor. In Turkey, there were fewer patients per doctor, nurse, dentist, and midwife in 2020 compared to 2009. In 2019, roughly seven out of ten people had received medical attention from a specialist in the previous 12 months; more women than men seek medical consultations (The Statistics Portal, 2022).

The available EHR solutions:

ICD-10 coding is the standard for describing illnesses in these records (Health care resource guide, 2019).

Electronic health records description:

Turkey has adopted a progressive stance when it comes to integrating health IT solutions into its healthcare system. Electronic health records (EHRs) are any data that is recorded, stored, transmitted, accessed, correlated, and processed using electronic systems with respect to past, present, and future physical and mental health conditions or diseases of individuals, according to the Turkish Ministry of Health (2020). The medical record contains information about all consultations, exams, treatments, and prescriptions (Health care resource guide, 2019). Electronic medication administration records (EMAR), closed-loop medication administration records (CLMA), clinical decision support systems (CDSS), picture archiving and communication systems (PACS), and computerized physician order entries (CPOE) are some of the key features that each EHR contains (eMAR). Additional modules necessary for clinical and operational procedures are included, such as patient administration systems (PAS) that can record patients' identification and demographic information (Connection, 2018).

Various information systems are used to gather patient information at the individual level. The Dental Health Information System (DHBS), Family Medicine Information System (Aile Hekimlii Bilgi Sistemi, AHBS), Public Health Information System (Halk Sal Yönetim Sistemi, HSYS), Medical Examination Information System (Muayene Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi, MBYS), and Public Health Information System (Halk Sal Yönetim Sistemi, HSYS) are these systems.

Role of the ministry of health:

The Ministry of Health (MOH), which oversees the aforementioned information systems, receives and stores all data gathered across the country on MOH servers. The Turkish healthcare system's e-pulse platform is where the patient data at the individual-level that were gathered from these information systems are stored. A cloud-based system called E-pulse gathers information from both public and private sources as well as from mobile devices and the Internet. Diagnoses, prescriptions, medical history, surgical history, imaging and reports, lab test results, medications taken, and epacrises reports are among the historical patient data stored by E-Pulse (if entered by the physician) (World Bank Group, 2019).

Information exchange:

Conceptually, the majority of health information systems (HIS) utilize the same kind of data (demographics, medical history, medications, diagnosis, laboratory findings, billing, etc.). The majority of hospital information systems in Turkey have developed their own distinct terminology for medical data because the medical content standards of HIS were not established when they were first used in hospitals. The HIS process found it challenging to accurately and quickly transfer data due to this non-standardized terminology. Additionally, all public hospitals are connected to e-pulse, but university and private hospitals only voluntarily provide data to the platform (Isleyen & Ulgu,2020).

Between 2014 and 2017, a survey was conducted in Turkey to determine the availability and prevalence of medical information systems and EHR functions as well as their use within 600 (68.9%) state hospitals. The results show that 63.1 percent of all hospitals in Turkey have at least basic EHR functions, and 36 percent have comprehensive EHR functions. The results also suggest that smaller hospitals are more adept at implementing specific EHR functions than larger hospitals (Kose et al.,2020).

Challenges of the Turkish health care system:

The absence of clearly defined objectives for integrated care, access restrictions to patient data at all levels of care for planning integrated care, and a lack of sufficient medical staff at the primary care level to address the working modality change that would accompany integrated care are just a few of the difficulties. The lack of financial models and mechanisms to address NCDs in primary care as well as significant changes in MoH upper management over the past few years make long-term program planning and implementation challenging due to the inconsistent top-level commitment to potential integrated care initiatives (vretveit, J. 2017).

The available improvement plan:

The Turkish Ministry of Health (MoH) has developed a strategic plan for 2019 to 2023 that emphasizes the growing burden of non-communicable diseases while addressing the problems facing the healthcare system. In order to manage NCDs, the plan emphasizes the need for improved health care delivery models, continuity, proactive approaches, and close patient follow-up (Turkish MoH,2020).

Research about health:

Since researchers place a high value on local content, local scholarly journals are among the most frequently used books in the library. The Turkey Database offers on-going full-text access to academic journals that are continuously published in Turkey by universities and scholarly publishing houses. The major academic fields of business, science, technology, medicine, social sciences, political science, and humanities are all represented. Moreover, Turkey is a member of the Global Health Data Exchange, whose database of polls, censuses, vital records, and other health-related data is accessible at http://www.healthdata.org/turkey.

Conclusion

Despite advancements, the Turkish healthcare system still confronts numerous obstacles. Medical facilities have higher quality in urban areas. Many areas of medicine are suffering from a lack of personnel. Spending and funding healthcare continue to be a problem as the system attempts to keep up with rising demand. Progress has been made toward establishing a national healthcare system in Turkey. The government spends money on facilities, insurance, and regulations to guarantee citizens access to first-rate medical care.

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